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A

DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED AT THE

DEDICATION

OF THE

Unitarian Congregational Church

IN

NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND, JULY 27, 1836.

BY WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING.

BOSTON:

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY S. N. DICKINSON,

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JOHN IV. 23, 24. *The hour cometh and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.*

THE dedication of an edifice to the worship of God is a proper subject of gratitude and joy. Even if the consecration be made by Christians, from whom we differ in opinion, we should still find satisfaction in the service. We should desire that our neighbours, whose convictions of truth and duty require them to separate from us in religious services, should enjoy the same accommodations with ourselves; and it should comfort us to think, that Christianity is so eminently "the power of God unto salvation," its great truths so plain and so quickening, that among all sects acknowledging Christ and consulting his word, its purifying influences, however counteracted by erroneous views, will more or less be felt. We should rejoice to think, that God can be monopolised by no party, that his spirit is a universal presence, that religion, having its root in the soul of man, can live and flourish amidst many errors, that truth and goodness can no more be confined to a single church, than the light of the sun can be shut up in a private dwelling, that amidst all the diversities of forms, names and creeds, acceptable worship may be offered to God, and the soul ascend to Heaven.

It is the custom of our times to erect beautiful structures for the purposes of the present life, for legislation, for literature, for the arts. But important as these interests are, they are not the noblest. Man's highest relations are not political, earthly, human. His whole nature is not exhausted in studying and subduing outward nature, in establishing outward order, in storing the mind with knowledge which may adorn and comfort his outward life. He has wants too deep, and powers and affections too large for the outward world. He comes from God. His closest connection is with God; and he can find life and peace only in the knowledge of his Creator. Man's glory or true end is not revealed to us in the most magnificent structure which the architect ever reared for earthly uses. A humble spire pointing Heavenward from an obscure church, speaks of man's nature, man's dignity, man's destiny more eloquently than all the columns and arches of Greece and Rome, the mausoleums of Asia, or the pyramids of Egypt. Is it not meet then to be grateful and joyful, when a house is set apart to the worship of God?

This edifice where we now meet is not indeed wholly new. Its frame is older than the oldest of us. But so great are the changes which it has undergone, that, were they who laid its foundations to revisit the earth, they would trace hardly a feature of their work; and as it is now entered by a new religious congregation, there is a fitness in the present solemnity, by which we dedicate it to the worship of God. My purpose in this discourse is to shew that we should enter this edifice with gratitude and joy, first, because it is dedicated to Worship in the most general sense of that term, and in the second place on account of the particular worship to which it is set apart. I shall close with some remarks of a personal and local character, which may be allowed to one, who was born and brought up on this island, whose heart swells with local attachment,

and whose memory is crowded with past years as he stands, after a long absence, within these walls, where he sat in his childhood, and where some of his earliest impressions were received.

I. We ought to enter this house with gratitude and joy, for it is dedicated to Worship. Its end is, that men should meet within its walls to pay religious homage; to express and strengthen pious veneration, love, thankfulness and confidence; to seek and receive pure influences from above; to learn the will of God; and to consecrate themselves to the virtue in which he delights. This edifice is reared to the glory of God, reared like the universe to echo with his praise, to be a monument to his being, perfection and dominion. Worship is man's highest end, for it is the employment of his highest faculties and affections on the sublimest object. We have much for which to thank God, but for nothing so much as for the power of knowing and adoring Himself. This creation is a glorious spectacle; but there is a more glorious existence for our minds and hearts, and that is the Creator. There is something divine in the faculties by which we study the visible world, and subject it to our wills, comfort, enjoyment. But it is a diviner faculty, by which we penetrate beyond the visible, free ourselves of the finite and the mutable, and ascend to the Infinite and the Eternal. It is good to make earth and ocean, winds and flames, sun and stars tributary to our present well-being. How much better to make them ministers to our spiritual wants, teachers of heavenly truth, guides to a more glorious Being than themselves, bonds of union between man and his Maker.

There have been those who have sought to disparage worship by representing it as an arbitrary, unnatural service, a human contrivance, an invention for selfish ends. Had I time, I should be glad to disprove this sophistry by laying open to you human nature, and

showing the deep foundation laid in all its principles and wants for religion; but I can meet the objection only by a few remarks drawn from history. There have been, indeed, periods of history in which the influence of the religious principle seems to have been overwhelmed; but in this it agrees with other great principles of our nature, which in certain stages of the race disappear. There are certain conditions of society, in which the desire of knowledge seems almost extinct among men, and they abandon themselves for centuries to brutish ignorance. There are communities, in which the natural desire of reaching a better lot gives not a sign of its existence, and society remains stationary for ages. There are some, in which even the parental affection is so far dead, that the new-born child is cast into the stream or exposed to the storm. So the religious principle is in some periods hardly to be discerned; but it is never lost. No principle is more universally manifested. In the darkest ages there are some recognitions of a superior power. Man feels that there is a being above himself, and he clothes that being in what to his rude conception is great and venerable. In countries where architecture was unknown, men chose the solemn wood or the mountain top for worship; and when this art appeared, its first monuments were temples to God. Before the invention of letters, hymns were composed to the Divinity; and music, we have reason to think, was the offspring of religion. Music in its infancy was the breathing of man's fears, wants, hopes, thanks, praises, to an unseen power. You tell me, my sceptical friend, that religion is the contrivance of the priest. How came the priest into being? What gave him his power? Why was it that the ancient legislator professed to receive his laws from the gods? The fact is a striking one, that the earliest guides and leaders of the human race looked to the heavens for security and strength to earthly institutions, that they were compelled to speak to men in a higher name than man's.

Religion was an earlier bond and a deeper foundation of society than government. It was the root of civilization. It has founded the mightiest empires; and yet men question whether religion be an element; a principle of human nature.

In the earliest ages, before the dawn of science, man recognised an immediate interference of the Divinity in whatever powerfully struck his senses. To the savage the thunder was literally God's voice, the lightning his arrow, the whirlwind his breath. Every unusual event was a miracle, a prodigy, a promise of good, or a menace of evil from Heaven. These rude notions have faded before the light of science, which reveals fixed laws, a stated order of nature. But in these laws, this order, the religious principle now finds confirmations of God, infinitely more numerous and powerful than the savage found in his prodigies. In this age of the world, there is a voice louder than thunder and whirlwinds, attesting the Divinity; the voice of the wisely interpreted works of God, every where proclaiming wisdom unsearchable, harmony unbroken, and a benevolent purpose in what to ages of ignorance seemed ministers of wrath. In the present, above all times, worship may be said to have its foundation in our nature; for by the improvements of this nature, we have placed ourselves nearer to God as revealed in his universe. The clouds which once hung over the creation are scattered. The heavens, the earth, the plant, the human frame, now that they are explored by science, speak of God as they never did before. His handwriting is brought out, where former ages saw but a blank. Nor is it only by the progress of science, that the foundation of religion is made broader and deeper. The progress of the arts, in teaching us the beneficent uses to which God's works may be applied, in extracting from them new comforts, and in diminishing or alleviating human suffering, has furnished new testimonies to the goodness of the Creator. Still more the progress of society has

given new power and delicacy to the sense of beauty in human nature, and in consequence of this, the creation of God has become a far more attractive, lovely and magnificent work than men looked on in earlier times. Above all, the moral susceptibilities and wants, the deeper and more refined feelings, which unfold themselves in the course of human improvement, are so many new capacities and demands for religion. Our nature is perpetually developing new senses for the perception and enjoyment of God. The human race, as it advances, does not leave religion behind it, as it leaves the shelter of caves and forests; does not outgrow faith, does not see it fading like the mist before its rising intelligence. On the contrary, religion opens before the improved mind in new grandeur. God, whom uncivilized man had narrowed into a local and tutelar Deity, rises with every advance of knowledge to a loftier throne, and is seen to sway a mightier sceptre. The soul, in proportion as it enlarges its faculties and refines its affections, possesses and discerns within itself a more and more glorious type of the Divinity, learns his spirituality in its own spiritual powers, and offers him a profounder and more inward worship. Thus deep is the foundation of worship in human nature. Men may assail it, may reason against it; but sooner can the laws of the outward universe be repealed by human will, sooner can the sun be plucked from his sphere, than the idea of God can be erased from the human spirit, and his worship banished from the earth. All other wants of man are superficial. His animal wants are but for a day, and are to cease with the body. The profoundest of all human wants is the want of God. Mind, spirit, must tend to its source. It cannot find happiness but in the Perfect Mind, the Infinite Spirit. Worship has survived all revolutions. Corrupted, dishonored, opposed, it yet lives. It is immortal as its Object, immortal as the soul from which it ascends.

Let us rejoice then in this house. It is dedicated to Worship; it can have no higher use. The heaven of heavens has no higher service or joy. The universe has no higher work. Its chief office is to speak of God. The sun, in awakening innumerable forms of animal and vegetable life, exerts no influence to be compared with what it puts forth in kindling the human soul into piety, in being a type, representative, preacher of the glory of God.

II. I have now spoken of worship in the most general sense. I have said that this house, considered as separated to the adoration of God, should be entered joyfully and gratefully, without stopping to enquire under what particular views or forms God is here to be adored. I now proceed to observe, that when we consider the particular worship which is here to be offered, this occasion ought to awaken pious joy. I need not tell you that whilst the religious principle is a part of man's nature, it is not always developed and manifested under the same forms. Men, agreeing in the recognition of a divinity, have not agreed as to the service he may accept. Indeed it seems inevitable, that men, who differ in judgment on all subjects of thought, should form different apprehensions of the invisible, infinite, and mysterious God, and of the methods of adoring him. Uniformity of opinion is to be found no where, and ought to be expected least of all in religion. Who, that considers the vast, the indescribable diversity in men's capacities and means of improvement, in the discipline to which they are subjected, in the schools in which they are trained, in the outward vicissitudes and inward conflicts through which they pass, can expect them to arrive at the same conclusions in regard to their origin and destiny, in regard to the Being from whom they sprung and the world toward which they tend. Accordingly religion has taken innumerable forms, and some it must be acknowledged most unworthy of its object. The great

idea of God has been seized upon by men's selfish desires, hopes, and fears, and often so obscured that little of its purifying power has remained. Man, full of wants, conscious of guilt, exposed to suffering, and peculiarly struck by the more awful phenomena of nature, has been terror-smitten before the unseen, irresistible power with which he has felt himself encompassed. Hence to appease his wrath and secure his partial regards has been the great object of worship. Hence worship has been so often a pompous machinery, a tribute of obsequious adulation, an accumulation of gifts and victims. Hence worship has been the effort of nations and individuals to bend the Almighty to their particular interests and purposes, and not the reverential, grateful, joyful, filial lifting up of the soul to Infinite Greatness, Goodness, Rectitude and Purity. Even under Christianity human infirmity has disfigured the thought of God. Worship has been debased by fear and selfishness into a means of propitiating wrath, calming fear, and securing future enjoyment. All sects have carried their imperfection into their religion. None of us can boast of exemption from the common frailty. That this house is to be set apart to a perfect, spotless, unerring worship, none of us are so presumptuous as to hope. But I believe, that in the progress of society and Christianity, higher and purer conceptions of the Divinity have been unfolded; and I cannot but believe, that the views of God and of his worship to which this house is now consecrated are so far enlightened, enlarged, purified, as to justify us in entering its walls with great thankfulness and joy.

This house is not reared to perpetuate the superstitions of past ages, nor of the present age. It is not reared to doom the worshipper to continual repetition of his own or other delusions. It is reared for the progress of truth, reared in the faith that the church is destined to new light and new purity, reared in the anticipation of a happier, holier age. As I look round I am met by none

of the representations of the Divinity which degraded the ancient temples. My eyes light on no image of wood or stone, on no efforts of art to embody to the eye the invisible Spirit. As I look round, I am met by none of the forms, which Providence, in accommodation to a rude stage of society, allowed to the Jewish people. No altar sends up here the smoke of incense or victims. No priesthood gorgeously arrayed presents to God the material offerings of man. Nor are my eyes pained by the cumbersome ceremonies, by which in later ages Christianity was overlaid, and almost overwhelmed. No childish pomps, borrowed from Judaism and heathenism, obscure here the simple majesty, the sublime spiritual purpose of Christianity. Nor is this house reared for the promulgation of doctrines, which tend to perpetuate the old servility with which God was approached, to make man abject in the sight of his maker, to palsy him with terror, to prostrate his reason. This house is reared to assist the worshipper in conceiving and offering more and more perfectly the worship described in the text, the worship of the Father in spirit and truth. On this topic, on the nature of the worship to be offered in this house, I have many reflections to offer. My illustrations may be reduced to the following heads. This house is reared, first, for the worship of One Infinite Person and one only; of Him whom Jesus always distinguished and addressed as the Father. In the next place, it is erected for the worship of God under the special character of Father, that is of a Parental Divinity. In the last place, it is set apart to the worship of Him in Spirit and Truth.

First, You have prepared this edifice, that here you may worship One Infinite Person, even Him and Him only whom Jesus continually calls the Father. One would think, that on this point there could be no difference among Christians. One would think, that Jesus had placed the Object of Christian worship beyond all dispute. It is hard to conceive more solemn, more defi-

nite language than he has used. "The hour cometh and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship him." Yet it is well known, that very many Christians deny that one person, the Father, is the only proper object of supreme worship. They maintain that two other persons, the Son and the Holy Spirit, are to be joined with him in our adoration, and that the most important distinction of the Christian religion is the worship of God in three persons. Against this human exposition of Christianity we earnestly protest. Whilst we recognize with joy, the sincerity and piety of those who adopt it, we maintain that this gross departure from the simplicity and purity of our faith is fraught with evil to the individual and the church. This house is reared to be a monument to the proper unity of God. We worship the Father.

All the grounds of this peculiarity of our worship cannot of course be expounded in the limits of a discourse, nor indeed do we deem any labored exposition necessary. We start from a plain principle. We affirm, that if any point in a religious system must be brought out explicitly, must not be left to inference, but set forth in simple, direct, authoritative language, it is the Object of worship. On this point we should expect peculiar explicitness, if a revelation should be communicated for the purpose of giving a new direction to men's minds in this particular. Now among Jews and Gentiles the worship of three infinite persons, one of whom was clothed with a human form, was unknown; and of consequence if this strange, mighty innovation had been intended by Jesus and had constituted the most striking peculiarity of his system, it must have been announced with all possible clearness and strength. Be it then remembered, that Jesus, in a solemn description of the true worship which he was to introduce, made not an allusion to this peculiarity, but declared, as the characteristic of the true worshippers, that they should worship

the Father in Spirit and in truth. Be it also remembered, that Jesus never enjoined the worship of three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Not one injunction to this effect can be found in the gospel or in the writings of the apostles. This strange worship rests on inference alone. "The true worshippers (says the text) shall worship the Father." When his disciples came to him to be instructed in prayer, he taught them to say, Our Father. In his last affectionate discourse he again and again taught his disciples to pray to the Father in his name. This dying injunction, so often and so tenderly repeated, should not for slight reasons be explained away. Still more, just before his death, Jesus himself in presence of his disciples prayed to the Father, and prayed in this language: Father, This is life eternal, that they (i. e. men) should know *thee, the only true God*, and Jesus Christ whom *thou hast sent.*

To these remarks it is common to reply, that we read in the New Testament, that Jesus was again and again worshipped, and that in admitting this he manifested himself to be the object of religious adoration. It is wonderful that this fallacy, so often exposed, should be still repeated. Jesus indeed received worship or homage, but this was not offered as adoration to the Infinite God; it was the homage, which, according to the custom of the age and of the eastern world, was paid to men invested with great authority whether in civil or religious concerns. Whoever has studied the Scriptures with the least discernment must know, that the word, worship, is used in two different senses, to express, first, the adoration due to the Infinite Creator, and secondly the reverence which was due to sovereigns and prophets, and which of course belonged peculiarly to the most illustrious representative of God, to his beloved Son. Whoever understands the import of the English language in the time when our translation was made, must know that the word was then used to express the homage paid to human superiors, as well as the supreme reverence

belonging to God alone. Let not an ambiguous word darken the truth. We are sure, that the worship paid to Christ during his public ministry, was rendered to him as a divine messenger and not as God; for in the first place it was offered, before his teachings had been sufficiently full and distinct to reveal the mystery of his nature, supposing it to have been divine. We pronounce it not merely improbable but impossible, that Jesus, a poor man, a mechanic from Galilee, at the beginning of his mission, when his chosen disciples were waiting for his manifestation as an earthly prince, should have been adored as the everlasting invisible God. Again, the titles given him by those who worshipped him, such as Good Teacher, Son of David, Son of God, show us, that the thought of adoring him as the Self-Existent, Infinite Divinity, had no place in their minds. But there is one consideration which sets this point at rest. The worship paid to Jesus during his ministry was offered him in public, in sight of the Jewish people. Now to the Jews, no crime was so flagrant, as the paying of divine homage to a human being, such as they esteemed Jesus to be. Of consequence had they seen in the marks of honor yielded to Jesus even an approach to this adoration, their exasperation would have burst forth in immediate overwhelming violence on the supposed impiety. The fact, that they witnessed the frequent prostration of men before Jesus, or what is called the worship of him, without once charging it as a crime, is a demonstration that the act was in no respect a recognition of him as the supreme God.

It is worthy of remark that the passages, which are announced as the strongest proofs of the divine worship of Christ, directly disprove the doctrine, if the connection be regarded. One of these texts is the declaration of Jesus, that we must "honor the Son even as we honor the Father." Hear the whole passage. "The Father hath *given* all judgment to the Son, that all men should honor the Son, as they honor the Father. He

that honoreth not the Son, honoreth not the Father *who sent him.*"* You observe, that it is not the supreme underived divinity of Christ, but the power given him by his Father, which is here expressly declared to be the foundation of the honor challenged for him, and that we are called to honor him, as sent by God. Another passage much relied on is the declaration of Paul, that "at the name of Jesus every knee should bow and every tongue acknowledge him Lord." Read the whole text. "God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name, above every name, that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in Heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father."† Could language express more clearly, the distinct, derived and dependent nature of Jesus Christ, or teach that the worship due him is subordinate, having for its foundation the dignity conferred on him by God and terminating on the Father as its supreme object.

This House then is erected to the supreme worship of the Father, to the recognition of the Father only as the self-existent Infinite God. Homage will here be paid to Jesus Christ, and, I trust, a far more profound and affectionate homage than he received on earth, when his spiritual character and the true purposes of his mission were almost unknown. But we shall honor him as the Son, the brightest image, the sent of God, not as God himself. We shall honor him as exalted above every name or dignity in Heaven or earth, but as exalted by God for his obedience unto death. We shall honor him as clothed with power to give life and judge, but shall remember that the Father hath given all judgment and quickening energy to the Son. We look up with delight and reverence to his divine virtues, his celestial love, his truth, his spirit; and we are sure that in as far as we imbibe these from the affectionate remembrance of his

* John v. 22, 23. † Philippians ii. 3.

life, death and triumphs, we shall render the worship most acceptable to this disinterested friend of the human race.

I have said that this house is set apart to the worship of the Father. But this term expresses not only the Person, the Being to whom it is to be paid. It expresses a peculiar character. It ascribes peculiar attributes to God. It ascribes to him the Parental relation and the disposition of a Parent. I therefore observe, in the second place, that this house is reared to the adoration of God in his Paternal character. It is reared to a Parental Divinity. To my own mind this view is more affecting than the last. Nothing so touches me, when I look round these walls, as the thought that God is to be worshipped here as the Father. That God has not always been worshipped as a Father, even among Christians, you well know. Men have always inclined to think, that they honor God by placing him on a distant throne, much more than by investing him with the mild lustre of parental goodness. They have made him a stern sovereign, giving life on hard terms, preferring his own honor to the welfare of his creatures, demanding an obedience which he gives no strength to perform, preparing endless torments for creatures whom he brings into being wholly evil, and refusing to pardon the least sin, the sin of the child, without an infinite satisfaction. Men have too often been degraded, broken in spirit, stripped of manly feeling, rather than lifted up to true dignity, by their religion. How seldom has worship breathed the noblest sentiments of human nature. Thanks to Jesus Christ, that he came to bring us to a purifying, ennobling, rejoicing adoration. He has revealed the Father. His own character was a bright revelation of the most lovely and attractive attributes of the Divinity, so that he was able to say "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." By his manifestation of the Parental character of God, he created religion

anew. He breathed a new and heavenly spirit into worship. He has made adoration a filial communion, assimilating us to our Creator. Ought we not then to rejoice in this house as set apart to the worship of the Father, to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Father! In this one word what consoling, strengthening, ennobling truth is wrapt up. In this single view of God how much is there to bind us to him, with strong, indissoluble, ever growing love, and to make worship not only our chief duty, but our highest privilege and joy. The Father! can it be that "the High and Holy One who inhabiteth eternity," "the Lord of Heaven and earth," the Majesty of the universe, bears to us this relation, reveals himself under this name, and that we, so weak and erring, may approach him with the hope of children. Who cannot comprehend the dignity and blessedness of such worship? Who does not feel, that the man, to whom God's parental character is a deep-felt reality, has in this conviction a fountain of strength, hope and purity springing up into everlasting life.

But to offer this true worship we must understand distinctly what we mean, when we call God the Father. The word has a deep and glorious import, and in as far as this is unknown, religion will want life and power. Is it understood? I am bound to say, that there seems to me a want of purity, of spirituality in the conception of God's parental relation, even among those Christians who profess to make it the great foundation and object of their worship. Too many rest in vague conceptions of God as their Creator, who supplies their wants, and who desires their happiness, and they think, that, thus regarding him, they know the Father. Such imperfect views incline me to state at some length what I deem the truth on this point. No truth is so essential to Christian worship. No truth sheds such a flood of light on the whole subject of religion.

My friends you are to come here to worship the

Father. What does this term import. It does not mean merely that God is your Creator. He is indeed the Creator, and as such let him be adored. This is his sole prerogative. His and his only is the mysterious power, which filled the void space with a universe. His the Almighty voice, which called the things which were not, and they came forth. The universe is a perpetual answer to this creating Word. For this, worship God. In every thing hear an exhortation to adore. In the grandeur, beauty, order of nature, see a higher glory than its own, a mysterious force deeper than all its motions; and from its countless voices, from its mild and awful tones, gather the one great lesson which they conspire to teach, the majesty of their author.

But my friends God is more than creator. To create is not to be a Father in the highest sense of that term. He created the mountain, the plant, the insect, but we do not call him their Father. We do not call the artist the Father of the statue which he models, nor the mechanician the Father of the machine he contrives. It is the distinction of a Father, that he communicates an existence like his own. The Father gives being to the child, and the very idea of the child is, that he bears the image as well as receives existence from the power of the parent. God is the Father, because he brings into life minds, spirits, partaking of energies kindred to his own attributes. Accordingly the scripture teaches us, that God made man in his own image, after his own likeness. Here is the ground of his paternal relation to the human race, and hence he is called in an especial sense the Father of those who make it the labor of life to conform themselves more and more to their divine original. God is "the Father of spirits."

My friends we are not wholly matter, we are not wholly flesh. Were we so, we could not call God our Father. God is a spirit, says the text, and we are spirits also. This our consciousness teaches. We are conscious of a principle superior to the body which

comprehends and controls it. We are conscious of faculties higher than the senses. We do something more than receive impressions passively, unresistingly, like the brute, from the outward world. We analyze, compare, and combine anew the things which we see, subject the outward world to the inquisition of reason, create sciences, rise to general laws, and through these establish an empire over earth and sea. We penetrate beneath the surface which the senses report; search for the hidden causes, enquire for the ends or purposes, trace out the connections, dependencies and harmonies of nature; discover a sublime unity amidst its boundless variety, and order amidst its seeming confusion; rise to the idea of one all-comprehending and all-ordaining mind; and thus by thought make as it were a new universe radiant with wisdom, beneficence and beauty. We are not mere creatures of matter and sense. We conceive a higher good than comes from the senses. We possess, as a portion of our being, a law higher than appetite, nobler and more enduring than all the laws of matter, the Law of Duty. We discern, we approve, the Right, the Good, the Just, the Holy, and by this sense of rectitude are laid under obligations, which no power of the outward universe can dissolve. We have within us a higher force than all the forces of material nature, a power of will which can adhere to duty and to God in opposition to all the might of the elements, and all the malignity of earth or Hell. We have thoughts, ideas, which do not come from matter, the Ideas of the Infinite, the Everlasting, the Immutable, the Perfect. Living amidst the frail, the limited, the changing, we rise to the thought of Unbounded, Eternal, Almighty Goodness. Nor is this all. While matter obeys mechanical and irresistible laws, and is bound by an unrelaxing necessity to the same fixed, unvarying movements, we feel ourselves to be Free. We have power over ourselves, over thought and desire, power to conform ourselves to a law written on our hearts,

and power to resist this law. Man must never be confounded with the material, mechanical world around him. He is a spirit. He has capacities, thoughts, impulses, which assimilate him to God. His reason is a ray of the Infinite Reason; his conscience, an oracle of the Divinity, publishing the Everlasting Law of Rectitude. Therefore God is his Father. Therefore he is bound to his maker by a spiritual bond. This we must feel, or we know nothing of the parental relation of God to the human race.

God is the Father and as such let him be worshipped. He is the Father. By this I understand that he has given being not only to worlds of matter, but to a rational, moral, spiritual universe, and still more I understand, not only that he has created a spiritual family in Heaven and on earth, but that he manifests towards them the attributes and exerts on them the influences of a Father. Some of these attributes and influences I will suggest, that the parental character in which God is to be worshipped may be more distinctly apprehended and more deeply felt.

First then, in calling God the Father I understand that he loves his rational and moral offspring with unbounded affection. Love, is the fundamental attribute of a Father. How deep, strong, tender, enduring the attachment of a human parent! But this shadows forth feebly the Divine Parent. He loves us with an energy like that with which he upholds the universe. The human parent does not comprehend his child, cannot penetrate the mystery of the spiritual nature which lies hid beneath the infant form. It is the prerogative of God alone to understand the immortal mind to which he gives life. The narrowest human spirit can be comprehended in its depths and destiny by none but its maker, and is more precious in his sight than material worlds. Is he not peculiarly its father?

Again in calling God the Father, I understand that it is his chief purpose in creating and governing the

universe to educate, train, form, and enoble the rational and moral being to whom he has given birth. Education is the great work of a parent, and he who neglects it is unworthy the name. God gives birth to the mind, that it may grow and rise for ever, and its progress is the end of all his works. This outward universe, with its sun and stars, and mighty revolutions, is but a school in which the Father is training his children. God is ever present to the human mind to carry on its education, pouring in upon it instruction and incitement from the outward world, stirring up everlasting truths within itself, rousing it to activity by pleasure and pain, calling forth its affections by surrounding fellow-creatures, calling it to duty by placing it amidst various relations, awakening its sympathy by sights of sorrow, awakening its imagination by a world of beauty, and especially exposing it to suffering, hardship, and temptation, that by resistance it may grow strong, and by seeking help from above, it may bind itself closely to its Maker. Thus he is the Father. There are those who think, that God, if a parent, must make our enjoyment his supreme end. He has a higher end, our intellectual and moral education. Even the good human parent, desires the progress, the virtue of his child more than its enjoyment. God never manifests himself more as our father, than in appointing to us pains, conflicts, trials, by which we may rise to the heroism of virtue, may become strong to do, to dare, to suffer, to sacrifice all things at the call of truth and duty.

Again, in calling God a Father, I understand that he exercises authority over his rational offspring. Authority is the essential attribute of a father. A parent, worthy of that name, embodies and expresses both in commands and actions, the everlasting law of Duty. His highest function is to bring out in the minds of his children the idea of Right, and to open to them the perfection of their nature. It is too common a notion, that God as Father, must be more disposed to bless than to

command. His commands are among his chief blessings. He never speaks with more parental kindness than by that inward voice, which teaches duty and excites and cheers to its performance. Nothing is so strict, so inflexible in enjoining the right and the good, as perfect love. This can endure no moral stain in its object. The whole experience of life, rightly construed, is a revelation of God's parental authority and righteous retribution.

Again. When I call God the Father I understand that he communicates Himself, his own spirit, what is most glorious in his own nature to his rational offspring, a doctrine almost overwhelming by its grandeur, but yet true, and the very truth which shines most clearly from the christian scriptures. It belongs to a parent to breathe into the child whatever is best and loftiest in his own soul, and for this end a good father seeks every approach to the mind of the child. Such a father is God. He has created us not only to partake of his works, but to be "partakers of a divine nature," not only to receive his gifts but to receive Himself. As he is a pure spirit, he has an access to the minds of his children, not enjoyed by human parents. He pervades, penetrates our souls. All other beings, our nearest friends, are far from us, foreign to us, strangers, compared with God. Others hold intercourse with us through the body. He is in immediate contact with our souls. We do not discern him because he is too near, too inward, too deep to be recognized by our present imperfect consciousness. And he is thus near, not only to discern, but to act, to influence, to give his spirit, to communicate to us divinity. This is the great paternal gift of God. He has greater gifts than the world. He confers more than the property of the earth and heavens. The very attributes from which the earth and heavens sprung, these he imparts to his rational offspring. Even his disinterested, impartial, universal goodness, which diffuses beauty, life and happiness, even this excellence it is

his purpose to breathe into and cherish in the human soul. In regard to the spiritual influence, by which God brings the created spirit into conformity to his own, I would that I could speak worthily. It is gentle, that it may not interfere with our freedom. It sustains, mingles with, and moves all our faculties. It acts through nature, providence, revelation, society, and experience; and the scriptures, confirmed by reason and the testimonies of the wisest and best men, teach us, that it acts still more directly. God, being immediately present to the soul, holds immediate communion with it, in proportion as it prepares itself to receive and to use aright the heavenly inspiration. He opens the inward eye to himself, communicates secret monitions of duty, revives and freshens our convictions of truth, builds up our faith in human immortality, unseals the deep, unfathomed fountains of Love within us, instils strength, peace and comfort, and gives victory over pain, sin, and death.

This influence of God exerted on the soul to conform it to himself, to make it worthy of its divine parentage, this it is which most clearly manifests what is meant by his being our Father. We understand his parental relation to us, only as far as we comprehend this great purpose and exercise of his love. We must have faith in the human soul as receptive of the divinity, as made for greatness, for spiritual elevation, for likeness to God, or God's character as a Father will be to us an unrevealed mystery. If we think, as so many seem to think, that God has made us only for low pleasures and attainments, that our nature is incapable of godlike virtues, that our prayers for the Divine Spirit are unheard, that celestial influences do not descend into the human soul, that God never breathes on it to lift it above its present weakness, to guide it to a more perfect existence, to unite it more intimately with himself, then we know but faintly the meaning of a Father in Heaven. The great revelation in Christianity of a Paternal Divinity is still to be made to us.

I might here pause in the attempt to give distinct conceptions of the Father whom we are to worship; but there are two views so suited to us, as sinful and mortal beings, that I cannot pass them over without brief notice. Let me add then, that in speaking of God as the Father, I understand, that he looks with overflowing compassion on such of his rational offspring as forsake him, as forsake the law of duty. It is the property of the human parent to follow with yearnings of tenderness an erring child; and in this he is a faint type of God, who sees his lost sons "a great way off," who to recover his human family spared not his beloved Son, who sends his regenerating spirit into the fallen soul, sends rebuke and shame and fear and sorrow, and awakens the dead in trespasses and sins to a higher life than that which the first birth conferred.

I also understand, in calling God the Father, that he destines his rational, moral creature to Immortality. How ardently does the human parent desire to prolong the life of his child. And how much more must He, who gave being to the spirit with its unbounded faculties, desire its endless being. God is our Father, for he has made us to bear the image of his own eternity as well as of his other attributes. Other things pass away, for they fulfil their end; but the soul, which never reaches its goal, whose development is never complete, is never to disappear from the universe. God created it to receive forever of his fulness. His fatherly love is not exhausted in what he now bestows. There *is* a higher life. Human perfection is not a dream. The brightest visions of genius fade before the realities of excellence and happiness to which good men are ordained. In that higher life, the parental character of God will break forth from the clouds which now obscure it. His bright image in his children will proclaim the Infinite Father.

I have thus, my friends, set before you the true object of Christian worship. You are here to worship God as your spiritual parent, as the Father of your spirits,

whose great purpose is your spiritual perfection, your participation of a divine nature. I hold this view of God to be the true, deep foundation of christian worship. On your reception of it depends the worth of the homage to be offered here. It is not enough to think of God as operating around and without you, as creating material worlds, as the former of your bodies, as ordaining the revolution of seasons for your animal wants. There is even danger in regarding God exclusively as the author of the outward universe. There is danger, lest you feel as if you were overlooked in this immensity, lest you shrink before these mighty masses of matter, lest you see in the unchangeable laws of nature a stern order, to which the human being is a victim, and which heeds not the puny individual in maintaining the general good. It is only by regarding God as more than Creator, as your spiritual Father, as having made you to partake of his spiritual attributes, as having given you a spiritual power worth more than the universe, it is only by regarding his intimacy with the soul, his paternal concern for it, his perpetual influence on it, it is only by these views that worship rises into filial confidence, hope, joy, and rapture, and puts forth a truly ennobling power. Worship has too often been abject, the offering of fear or selfishness. God's greatness, though a pledge of greatness to his children, and his omnipotence, though an assurance to us of mighty power in our conflict with evil, have generated self-contempt and discouraged access to him. My friends, come hither to worship God as your Spiritual Father. No other view can so touch and penetrate the soul, can place it so near its maker, can open before it such vast prospects, can awaken such transports of praise and gratitude, can bow the soul in such ingenuous sorrow for sin, can so fortify you for the conflict against evil. Ought we not to rejoice that this house is reared for the worship of the spiritual Father?

The exposition which I have given under this head

of the parental relation of God to the human race is one in which I take the deepest interest. I have felt, however, as I proceeded, that very possibly objections would spring up in the minds of some who hear me. There are not a few who are sceptical as to whatever supposes a higher condition of human nature than they now observe. Perhaps some here could they speak would say, "We do not see the marks of this fatherly interest of God in man of which you have spoken. We do not see in man the signs of a being, so beloved, so educated, as you have supposed. His weakness, sufferings and sins, are surely no proofs of his having been created to receive God's spirit, to partake of the divinity." On this point I have much to say, but my answer must be limited to a few words. I reply, that the love of an Infinite Father may be expected often to work in methods beyond the comprehension of our limited minds. An immortal being in his infancy cannot of course comprehend all the processes of his education, many of which look forward to ages too distant for the imagination to explore. I would add, that notwithstanding the darkness which hangs over human life on account of the greatness of our nature, we can yet see bright signatures of the parental concern of God, and see them in the very circumstances which at first create doubt. Because we suffer, it ought not to be inferred, that God is not a Father. Suffering, trial, exposure seem to be necessary elements in the education of a moral being. It is fit, that a being, whose happiness and dignity are to be found in vigorous action and in forming himself, should be born with undeveloped capacities, and be born into a world of mingled difficulties and aids. We do see, that energy of thought, will, affection, virtue, the energy which is our true life and joy, often springs from trial. We can see too, that it is well that society like the individual should begin in imperfection; because men in this way become to each other means of discipline, because joint sufferings and the necessity of joint efforts awaken

both the affections and the faculties, because occasion and incitement are thus given to generous sacrifices, to heroic struggles, to the most beautiful and stirring manifestations of philanthropy, patriotism, and devotion. Were I called on to prove God's spiritual parental interest in us, I would point to the trials, temptations, evils of life; for to these we owe the character of Christ, we owe the apostle and martyr, we owe the moral force and deep sympathy of private and domestic life, we owe the development of what is divine in human nature. Truly God is our Father, and as such to be worshipped.

Having thus set forth very imperfectly, but from a full heart, the excellence of the homage which is here to be rendered to God in his Parental character, I ought now to proceed, according to the plan of this discourse, to show that we should enter this house with joy, because it is set apart to the worship of God in Spirit and in Truth, to an Inward not outward worship. In discussing this topic, I might enlarge on the vast and beneficent revolution which Jesus Christ wrought in religion, by teaching that God is a spirit, and to be spiritually adored. I might show how much he wrought for human elevation and happiness, when, in pronouncing the text, he shook the ancient temples to their foundations, quenched the fire on the heathen and Jewish altars, wrested the instruments of sacrifice from the hand of the priest, abolished sanctity of place, and consecrated the human soul as the true house of God. But the nature, grandeur, benefits of this spiritual worship, are subjects too extensive for our present consideration. Instead of discussion, I can only use the words of exhortation. I can only say, that you, who are to assemble in this place, are peculiarly bound to inward worship, for to you especially Christianity is an inward system. Most other denominations expect salvation more or less from what Jesus does abroad, especially from his agency on the mind of God. You expect it from what he does within your own

minds. His great glory, according to your views, lies in his influence on the human soul, in the communication of his spirit to his followers. To you salvation, heaven, and hell have their seat in the soul. To you, Christianity is wholly a spiritual system. Come then to this place to worship with the soul, to elevate the spirit to God. Let not this house be desecrated by a religion of show. Let it not degenerate into a place of forms. Let not your pews be occupied by lifeless machines. Do not come here to take part in lethargic repetitions of sacred words. Do not come from a cold sense of duty, to quiet conscience with the thought of having paid a debt to God. Do not come to perform a present task to ensure a future heaven. Come to find heaven now, to anticipate the happiness of that better world by breathing its spirit, to bind your souls indissolubly to your maker.—Come to worship in spirit and in truth, that is, intelligently, rationally, with clear judgment, with just and honorable conceptions of the infinite Father, not prostrating your understandings, not renouncing the divine gift of reason, but offering an enlightened homage, such as is due to the Fountain of intelligence and truth.—Come to worship with the heart as well as intellect, with life, fervor, zeal. Sleep over your business if you will, but not over your religion.—Come to worship with strong conviction, with living faith in a higher presence than meets the eye, with a feeling of God's presence not only around you, but in the depths of your souls.—Come to worship with a filial spirit, not with fear, dread and gloom, not with sepulchral tones and desponding looks, but with humble, cheerful, boundless trust, with overflowing gratitude, with a love willing and earnest to do and to suffer whatever may approve your devotion to God.—Come to worship him with what he most delights in, with aspiration for spiritual light and life; come to cherish and express desires for virtue, for purity, for power over temptation, stronger and more insatiable than spring up in your most eager pursuits of

business or pleasure; and welcome joyfully every holy impulse, every accession of strength to virtuous purpose, to the love of God and man. — In a word, come to offer a refined, generous worship, to offer a tribute worthy of Him who is the Perfection of truth, goodness, beauty, and blessedness. Adore him with the calmest reason and the profoundest love, and strive to conform yourselves to what you adore.

I have now my friends set before you the worship to which this building is set apart, and which, from its rational, filial, pure, and ennobling character, renders this solemnity a season for thankfulness and joy. I should not however be just to this occasion, or to the great purpose of this house, if I were to stop here. My remarks have hitherto been confined to the worship which is to be offered within these walls, to the influence to be exerted on you when assembled here. But has this house no higher end than to give an impulse to your minds for the very few hours which you are to spend beneath its roof? Then we have little reason to enter it with joy. The great end for which you are to worship here is, that you may worship every where. You are to feel God's presence here, that it may be felt wherever you go, and whatever you do. The very idea of spiritual homage is, that it takes possession of the soul, and becomes a part of our very being. The great design of this act of dedication is, that your houses, your places of business may be consecrated to God. This topic of omnipresent worship I cannot expand. One view of it, however, I must not omit. From the peculiar character of the worship to which this house is consecrated, you learn the *kind* of worship which you should carry from it into your common lives. It is not uncommon for the Christian teacher to say to his congregation, that when they leave the church, they go forth into a nobler temple, than one made with hands, into the temple of the Creation, and that they must go

forth to worship God in his works. The views given of the true worship in this discourse, will lead me to a somewhat different style of exposition. I will, indeed, say to you, go from this house to adore God as he is revealed in the boundless universe. This is one end of your worship here. But I would add, that a higher end is, that you should go forth to worship him as he is revealed in his rational and moral offspring, and to worship him by fulfilling, as you have power, his purposes in regard to these. My great aim in this discourse, has been to show that God is to be adored here as the Father of rational and moral beings, of yourselves and all mankind; and such a worship tends directly and is designed to lead us, when we go hence, to recognize God in our own nature, to see in men his children, to respect and serve them for their relationship to the Divinity, to see in them signatures of greatness amidst all their imperfection, and to love them with more than earthly love. We must not look round on the universe with awe, and on man with scorn, for man, who can comprehend the universe and its laws, "is greater than the universe, which cannot comprehend itself." God dwells in every human being more intimately than in the outward creation. The voice of God comes to us in the ocean, the thunder, the whirlwind; but how much more of God is there in his inward voice, in the intuitions of reason, in the rebukes of conscience, in the whispers of the Holy Spirit. I would have you see God in the awful mountain and the tranquil valley; but more, much more in the clear judgment, the moral energy, the disinterested purpose, the pious gratitude, the immortal hope of a good man. Go from this house to worship God by reverencing the human soul as his chosen sanctuary. Revere it in yourselves, revere it in others, and labor to carry it forward to perfection. Worship God within these walls as universally, impartially good to his human offspring; and go forth to breathe the same spirit. Go forth to respect the rights, and seek the

true, enduring welfare of all within your influence. Carry with you the conviction, that to trample on a human being, of whatever color, clime, rank, condition, is to trample on God's child ; that to degrade or corrupt a man, is to deface a holier temple than any material sanctuary. Mercy, Love, is more acceptable worship to God, than all sacrifices or outward offerings. The most celestial worship ever paid on earth was rendered by Christ, when he approached man, and the most sinful man, as a child of God, when he toiled and bled to awaken what was Divine in the human soul, to regenerate a fallen world. Be such the worship which you shall carry from this place. Go forth to do good with every power which God bestows, to make every place you enter happier by your presence, to espouse all human interests, to throw your whole weight into the scale of human freedom and improvement, to withstand all wrong, to uphold all right, and especially to give light, life, strength to the immortal soul. He who rears up one child in Christian virtue, or recovers one fellow creature to God, builds a temple more precious than Solomon's or St. Peter's, more enduring than earth or heaven.

I have now finished the general discussion which this occasion seemed to me to require, and I trust that a few remarks of a personal and local character will be received with indulgence. It is with no common emotion that I take part in the present solemnity. I stand now to teach, where in my childhood and youth I was a learner. The generation which I then knew has almost wholly disappeared. The venerable man, whose trembling voice I then heard in this place, has long since gone to his reward. My earliest friends, who watched over my childhood and led me by the hand to this spot, have been taken. Still my emotions are not sad. I rejoice ; for whilst I see melancholy changes around me, and still more feel, that time, which has

bowed other frames, has touched my own, I see that the work of human improvement has gone on. I see that clearer and brighter truths, than were opened on my own youthful mind, are to be imparted to succeeding generations. Herein I do and will rejoice.

On looking back to my early years I can distinctly recollect unhappy influences exerted on my mind by the general tone of religion in this town. I can recollect, too, a corruption of morals among those of my own age, which made boyhood a critical, perilous season. Still I must bless God for the place of my nativity; for as my mind unfolded, I became more and more alive to the beautiful scenery which now attracts strangers to our island. My first liberty was used in roaming over the neighboring fields and shores; and amid this glorious nature, that love of liberty sprang up, which has gained strength within me to this hour. I early received impressions of the great and the beautiful, which I believe have had no small influence in determining my modes of thought and habits of life. In this town I pursued for a time my studies of theology. I had no professor or teacher to guide me; but I had two noble places of study. One was yonder beautiful edifice, now so frequented and so useful as a public library, then so deserted that I spent day after day and sometimes week after week amidst its dusty volumes, without interruption from a single visiter. The other place was yonder beach, the roar of which has so often mingled with the worship of this place, my daily resort, dear to me in the sunshine, still more attractive in the storm. Seldom do I visit it now without thinking of the work, which there, in the sight of that beauty, in the sound of those waves, was carried on in my soul. No spot on earth has helped to form me so much, as that beach. There I lifted up my voice in praise amidst the tempest. There, softened by beauty, I poured out my thanksgiving and contrite confessions. There, in reverential sympathy with the mighty power around me,

I became conscious of power within. There, struggling thoughts and emotions broke forth, as if moved to utterance by nature's eloquence of the winds and waves. There began a happiness surpassing all worldly pleasures, all gifts of fortune, the happiness of communing with the works of God. Pardon me this reference to myself. I believe that the worship, of which I have this day spoken, was aided in my own soul by the scenes in which my early life was passed. Amidst these scenes, and in speaking of this worship, allow me to thank God that this beautiful island was the place of my birth.

Leaving what is merely personal, I would express my joy, and it is most sincere, in the dedication of this house, regarded as a proof and a means of the diffusion of Christian truth. Some perhaps may think, that this joy is not a little heightened by seeing a church set apart to the particular sect to which I am said to belong. But I trust, that what you have this day heard will satisfy most if not all who hear, that it is not a sectarian exultation to which I am giving utterance. I indeed take pleasure in thinking, that the particular views which I have adopted of the disputed doctrines of religion will here be made known; but I rejoice much more in thinking, that this house is pledged to no peculiar doctrines, that it is not erected to bind my own or any man's opinions on this or on future times, that it is consecrated to free investigation of religious truth, to religious progress, to the right of private judgment, to protestant and christian liberty. Most earnestly do I pray, that a purer theology, that diviner illuminations, that a truer worship than can now be found in our own or in any sect, may be the glory of this house. We who now consecrate it to God, believe in human progress. We do not say to the spirit of truth: "Thus far and no farther." We reprobate the exclusive, tyrannical spirit of the churches of this age, which denounce as an enemy to Christianity, who-

ever in the use of his intellectual liberty, and in the interpretation of God's word for himself, may differ from the traditions and creeds which have been received from fallible forefathers. We rear these walls not to a sect, but to religious, moral, intellectual, protestant, Christian liberty.

I rejoice that this temple of liberty is opened on this spot. I feel that this town has a right to an establishment, in which conscientious Christians may enquire and speak without dreading the thunders of excommunication, in which protestantism will not be dishonored by the usurpations of the Romish church. This island, like the state to which it belongs, was originally settled by men, who came hither for liberty of conscience, and in assertion of the right to interpret for themselves the word of God. Religious freedom was the very principle on which this town was founded, and I rejoice to know, that the spirit of religious freedom has never wanted champions here. I have recently read a very valuable discourse, which was delivered in this town about a century ago, and just a century after the cession of this island to our fathers by the Indians, and which breathes a liberality of thought and feeling, a reverence for the rights of the understanding and the conscience, very rare at that time in other parts of the country, and very far from being universal now. Its author, the Reverend Mr. Callender, was pastor of the first Baptist church in this place, the oldest of our churches, and it was dedicated to a descendant of the venerable Coddington, our first governor. The spirit of religious liberty, which pervades this discourse, has astonished as well as rejoiced me, and it should thrill the hearts of this people. Let me read a few sentences: —

"It must be a mean contracted way of thinking, to 'confine the favor of God, and the power of godliness 'to one set of speculative opinions, or any particular 'external forms of worship. How hard must it be to

'imagine, that all other Christians but ourselves, must be 'formal, and hypocritical, and destitute of the grace of 'God, because their education or capacity differs from 'ours, or that God has given them more or less light 'than to us; though we cannot deny, they give the 'proper evidence of their fearing God by their working 'righteousness, and show their love to him by keeping 'what they understand he has commanded; and though 'their faith in Christ Jesus purifies their hearts and 'works by love and overcomes the world. It would be 'hard to show, why liberty of conscience, mutual for-'bearance and good will, why brotherly kindness and 'charity is not as good a centre of unity as a constrain-'ed uniformity in external ceremonies or a forced sub-'scription to ambiguous articles. Experience has dearly 'convinced the world that unanimity in judgment and 'affection cannot be secured by penal laws. Who can 'tell, why the unity of spirit in the bonds of peace is 'not enough for Christians to aim at? And who can 'assign a reason why they may not love one another 'though abounding in their own several senses? And 'why if they live in peace, the God of love and peace 'may not be with them?

"There is no other bottom but this to rest upon, to 'leave others the liberty we should desire ourselves, 'the liberty wherewith Christ hath made them free."

Such was the liberal spirit expressed in this town a hundred years ago. I would it were more common in our own day.

Another noble friend of religious liberty threw a lustre on this island immediately before the revolution. I mean the Reverend Dr. Styles, pastor of the Second Congregational church, and afterwards President of Yale College. This country has not perhaps produced a more learned man. To enlarged acquaintance with physical science he added extensive researches into philology, history, and antiquities; nor did his indefatigable mind suffer any opportunity to escape him of adding to

his rich treasures of knowledge. His virtues were proportioned to his intellectual acquisition. I can well remember how his name was cherished among his parishioners, after years of separation. His visit to this place was to many a festival. When little more than a child, I was present at some of his private meetings with the more religious part of his former congregation; and I recollect how I was moved by the tears and expressive looks with which his affectionate exhortations were received. In his faith he was what was called a moderate Calvinist; but his heart was of no sect. He carried into his religion the spirit of liberty which then stirred the whole country. Intolerance, church-tyranny, in all its forms, he abhorred. He respected the right of private judgment, where others would have thought themselves authorised to restrain it. A young man, to whom he had been as a father, one day communicated to him doubts concerning the trinity. He expressed his sorrow; but mildly, and with undiminished affection told him to go to the scriptures, and to seek his faith there and only there. His friendships were confined to no parties. He desired to heal the wounds of the divided church of Christ, not by a common creed, but by the spirit of love. He wished to break every yoke, civil and ecclesiastical, from men's necks. To the influence of this distinguished man in the circle in which I was brought up, I may owe in part the indignation which I feel towards every invasion of human rights. In my earliest years, I regarded no human being with equal reverence. I have his form before me at this moment almost as distinctly as if I had seen him yesterday, so strong is the impression made on the child through the moral affections.

Let me add one more example of the spirit of religious freedom on this island. You may be surprised, perhaps, when you hear me name in this connexion the venerable man, who once ministered in this place, the Reverend Dr. Hopkins. His name is indeed associated

with a stern and appalling theology, and it is true, that he wanted toleration towards those who rejected his views. Still in forming his religious opinions, he was superior to human authority; he broke away from human creeds; he interpreted God's word for himself; he revered reason, the oracle of God within him. His system, however fearful, was yet built on a generous foundation. He maintained that all holiness, all moral excellence, consists in benevolence, or disinterested devotion to the greatest good; that this is the character of God; that love is the only principle of the divine administration. He taught that sin was introduced into the creation, and is to be everlastingly punished, because evil is necessary to the highest good. To this government, in which the individual is surrendered to the well being of the whole, he required entire and cheerful submission. Other Calvinists were willing that their neighbors should be predestined to everlasting misery for the glory of God. This noble-minded man demanded a more generous and impartial virtue, and maintained that we should consent to our own perdition, should be willing ourselves to be condemned, if the greatest good of the universe, and the manifestation of the divine perfections should so require. True virtue, as he taught, was an entire surrender of personal interest to the benevolent purposes of God. Self-love he spared in none of its movements. He called us to seek our own happiness, as well as that of others, in a spirit of impartial benevolence; to do good to ourselves, not from self-preference, not from the impulse of personal desires, but in obedience to that sublime law, which requires us to promote the welfare of each and all within our influence. I need not be ashamed to confess the deep impression which this system made on my youthful mind. I am grateful to this stern teacher for turning my thoughts and heart to the claims and majesty of impartial, universal benevolence. From such a man, a tame acquiescence in the established theology was not to be expected.

He indeed accepted the doctrine of predestination in its severest form; but in so doing he imagined himself a disciple of reason as well as of revelation. He believed this doctrine to be sustained by profound metaphysical argumentation, and to rest on the only sound philosophy of the human mind, so that in receiving it, he did not abandon the ground of reason. In accordance with his free spirit of inquiry, we find him making not a few important modifications of Calvinism. The doctrine that we are liable to punishment for the sin of our first parent he wholly rejected; and not satisfied with denying the imputation of Adam's guilt to his posterity, he subverted what the old theology had set forth as the only foundation of divine acceptance, namely the imputation of Christ's righteousness or merits to the believer. The doctrine that Christ died for the elect only, found no mercy at his hands. He taught that Christ suffered equally for all mankind. The system of Dr. Hopkins was indeed an effort of reason to reconcile Calvinism with its essential truths. Accordingly his disciples were sometimes called, and willingly called, Rational Calvinists. The impression which he made was much greater than is now supposed. The churches of New-England received a decided impression from his views; and though his name, once given to his followers, is no longer borne, his influence is still felt. The conflict now going on in our country, for the purpose of mitigating the harsh features of Calvinism, is a stage of the revolutionary movement to which he more than any man gave impulse. *I* can certainly bear witness to the spirit of progress and free inquiry which possessed him. In my youth I preached in this house at the request of the venerable old man. As soon as the services were closed, he turned to me with an animated benignant smile, and using a quaintness of expression which I need not repeat, said to me, that theology was still imperfect, and that he hoped I should live to carry it towards perfection. Rare and most honorable liberality in the leader of a

sect! He wanted not to secure a follower, but to impel a young mind to higher truth. I feel, that ability has not been given me to accomplish this generous hope; but such quickening language from such lips, though it could not give strength, might kindle desire, and elevate exertion.— Thus the spirit of religious freedom has not been wanting to this island. May this spirit, unawed by human reproach, unfettered by human creeds, availing itself gratefully of human aids, and above all looking reverently to God for light, dwell in the hearts of those who are to minister, and of those who shall worship within these walls. May this spirit spread far and wide and redeem the Christian world from the usurpations of catholic and protestant infallibility, from uncharitableness, intolerance, persecution and every yoke which has crushed the human soul.

I have done with the personal and the local. In conclusion, let me revert for one moment to the great topic of this discourse My friends, the spiritual worship of which I have this day spoken, is something *real.* There *is* a worship in the spirit, a worship very different from standing in the church, or kneeling in the closet, a worship which cannot be confined to set phrases and asks not the clothing of outward forms, a thirst of the soul for its Creator, an inward voice, which our nearest neighbor cannot hear, but which pierces the skies. To the culture of this spiritual worship, we dedicate this house. My friends, rest not in offering breath, in moving the lips, in bending the knee to your Creator. There is another, a nearer, a happier intercourse with Heaven, a worship of love, sometimes too full and deep for utterance, a union of mind with him closer than all earthly friendships. This is the worship to which Christ calls. Christ came not to build churches, not to rear cathedrals with Gothic arches, or swelling domes, but to dedicate the human soul to God. When God "bows the heavens

and comes down," it is not that he may take up his abode beneath the vault of a metropolitan temple, it is not that he is drawn by majestic spires or by clouds of fragrance, but that he may visit and dwell in the humble, obedient, disinterested soul. This house is to moulder away. Temples hewn from the rock will crumble to dust, or melt in the last fire. But the inward temple will survive all outward change. When winds and oceans and suns shall have ceased to praise God, the human soul will praise him. It will receive more and more divine inspirations of truth and love; will fill with its benevolent ministry wider and wider spheres; and will accomplish its destiny by a progress towards God as unlimited, as mysterious, as enduring as Eternity.

Note to Page 15.

I have not quoted the verses preceding those which I have extracted from the Epistle to the Philippians, which are often adduced in proof of Christ's supreme divinity, because it is acknowledged by learned men of all denominations, that our translation of the most important clause is incorrect, and a critical discussion of the subject would have been out of place. I think, however, that no man, unacquainted with the common theories, can read any translation and escape the impression, that Jesus Christ is a derived, dependent, subordinate being, and a distinct being from the Father. How plain is it, that in this passage Paul intends by the terms "God" and "the Father," not Jesus Christ but another being? How plain is it, that, in the passage chosen as the text for this discourse, our Saviour intended by these terms not himself but another being? What other idea could his hearers receive? What decisive proofs are furnished by his constant habit of speaking of "the Father" and of "God," as another being, and of distinguishing himself from him?

Note to Page 38.

I understand, that the interest, expressed by me in the character of Dr. Hopkins, has surprised some of my townsmen of Newport, who knew him only by report, or who saw him in their youth. I do not wonder at this. He lived almost wholly in his study, and like very retired men, was the object of little sympathy. His appearance was that of a man who had nothing to do with the world. I can well recollect the impression which he made on me when a boy, as he rode on horseback in a plaid gown fastened by a girdle round his waist, and with a study cap on his head instead of his wig. His delivery in the pulpit was the worst I ever met with. Such tones never came from any human voice within my hearing. He was the very ideal of bad delivery. Then I must say, the matter was often as uninviting as the manner. Dr. Hopkins was distinguished by nothing more than by faithfulness to his principles. He carried them out to their full extent. Believing as he did in total depravity, believing that there was nothing good or generous in human nature to which he could make an appeal, believing that he could benefit men only by setting before them their utterly lost and helpless condition, he came to the point without any circumlocution, and dealt out terrors with an unsparing liberality. Add to all this that his manners had a bluntness, partly natural, partly the result of long seclusion in the country. We cannot wonder that such a

man should be set down as hard and severe. But he had a true benevolence, and what is more worthy of being noted, he was given to a facetious style of conversation. Two instances immediately occur to me which happened in my own circle. One day, he dined at my father's with a young minister who was willing to comply with the costume of the day, but whose modesty only allowed the ruffles to peep from his breast. The Dr. said with good humor, "I don't care for ruffles; but if I wore them, I'd wear them like a man." I recollect that on visiting him one day when he was about eighty years of age, I found his eyes much inflamed by reading and writing. I took the liberty to recommend abstinence from these occupations. He replied smilingly with an amusing story and then added "If my eyes wont study, no eyes for me." This facetiousness may seem to some who are unacquainted with the world not consistent with the great severity of his theology. But nothing is more common than this apparent self-contradiction. The ministers, who deal most in terrors, who preach doctrines which ought to make their flesh creep and to turn their eyes into fountains of tears, are not generally distinguished by their spare forms or haggard countenances. They take the world as easily as people of a milder creed; and this does not show that they want sincerity or benevolence. It only shows how superficially men may believe in doctrines, which yet they would shudder to relinquish. It shows how little the import of language, which is thundered from the lips, is comprehended and felt. I should not set down as hard-hearted a man, whose appetite should be improved by preaching a sermon full of images and threatenings of "a bottomless hell." The best meals are sometimes made after such effusions. This is only an example of the numberless contradictions in human life. Men are every day saying and doing, from the power of education, habit, and imitation, what has no root whatever in their serious convictions. Dr. Hopkins, though his style of preaching and conversation did not always agree, was a sincere benevolent man. I remember hearing of his giving on a journey all he had to a poor woman. On another occasion he contributed to some religious object a hundred dollars, which he had received for the copy right of a book; and this he gave from his penury, for he received no fixed salary, and depended in a measure on the donations of friends for common comforts. When he first established himself in Newport, he was brought into contact with two great evils, the slave trade and slavery, in both of which a large part of the inhabitants were or had been engaged. "His spirit was stirred in him," and without "conferring with flesh or blood," without heeding the strong prejudices and passions enlisted on the side of these abuses, he bore his faithful testimony against them from the pulpit and the press. Still more, he labored for the education of the colored people, and had the happiness of seeing the fruits of his labors in the intelligence and exemplary piety of those who came under his influence. Much as he disapproved of the moderate theology of Dr. Styles, he cheerfully coöperated with him in this work. Their names were joined to a circular for obtaining funds to educate Africans as missionaries to their own country. These two eminent men who, as I think, held no ministerial intercourse, forgot their differences in their zeal for freedom and humanity.

Dr. Hopkins in conversing with me, on his past history, reverted more frequently to his religious controversies than to any other event of his life, and always spoke as a man conscious of having gained the victory; and in this, I doubt not, that he judged justly. He was true, as I have said, to his principles, and carried them out fearlessly to their consequences;

whilst his opponents wished to stop half way. Of course it was easy for a practised disputant to drive them from their position. They had indeed the advantage of common sense on their side, but this availed little at a time, when it was understood that common sense was to yield to the established creed. These controversies are most of them forgotten, but they were agitated with no small warmth. One of the most important, and which was confined to the Calvinists, turned on what were called the "Means of Grace." The question was, whether the unregenerate could do any thing for themselves, whether an unconverted man could, by prayer, by reading the scriptures, and by public worship, promote his own conversion, whether in a word, any means used by an unregenerate man would avail to that change of heart on which his future happiness depended. Dr. Hopkins, true to the fundamental principles of Calvinism, took the negative side of the question. He maintained, that man, being wholly depraved by nature, wholly averse to God and goodness, could do nothing but sin, before the mighty power of God had implanted a new principle of holiness within his heart; that of course, his prayers and efforts before conversion were sins and deserved the divine wrath; that his very struggles for pardon, and salvation, wanting as they did a holy motive, springing from the deep selfishness of an unrenewed soul, only increased his guilt and condemnation. The doctrine was indeed horrible, but a plain, necessary result of man's total corruption and impotence. I state this controversy that the reader may know the kind of topics, in which the zeal, and abilities of our fathers were employed. It also shews us, how extremes meet. Dr Hopkins contended that no means of religion or virtue could avail, unless used with a sincere love of religion and virtue. In this doctrine, all liberal Christians concur. In their hands, however, the doctrine wears an entirely different aspect, in consequence of their denial of total, original depravity, that terrible error, which drove Dr. Hopkins to conclusions equally shocking to the reason, to common sense, and to the best feelings of the heart.

The characteristic disposition of Dr. Hopkins to follow out his principles was remarkably illustrated in a manuscript of his which was never published, and which perhaps was suppressed by those who had the charge of his papers in consequence of its leaning towards some of the speculations of the infidel philosophy of the day in regard to Utility or the General Good. It fell into my hands after his death, and struck me so much that I think I can trust my recollections of it. It gave the author's ideas of Moral Good. He maintained that the object of "Moral Good," the object on which virtue is fixed, and the choice of which constitutes virtue, is "natural good," or the greatest possible amount of Enjoyment, not our own enjoyment only, but that of the whole system of being. He virtually, if not expressly set forth this "natural good," that is, happiness in the simple sense of enjoyment, as the ultimate good, and made moral good the means. I well recollect how, in starting from this principle he justified eternal punishment. He affirmed that sin or selfishness (synonymous words in his vocabulary) tended to counteract God's system which is framed for infinite happiness, or tended to produce infinite misery. He then insisted, that by subjecting the sinner to endless, that is, infinite misery, this tendency was made manifest; a correspondence was established between the sin and the punishment; and a barrier was erected against sin, which was demanded by the greatness of the good menaced by the wrong doer.

I have thrown together these recollections of a man, who has been crowded out of men's minds by the thronging events and interests of our time, but who must always fill an important place in our ecclesiastical history. He was a singularly blameless man, with the exception of intolerance towards those who differed from him. This he sometimes expressed in a manner which to those unacquainted with him, seemed a sign of any thing but benignity. In one point of view, I take pleasure in thinking of him. He was an illustration of the power of our spiritual nature. In narrow circumstances, with few outward indulgences, in great seclusion, he yet found much to enjoy. He lived in a world of thought, above all earthly passions. He represented to himself, as the result of the divine government, a boundless diffusion of felicity through the universe, and contrived to merge in this the horrors of his theological system. His doctrines indeed threw dark colors over the world around him; but he took refuge from the present state of things in the Millenium. The Millenium was his chosen ground. If any subject of thought possessed him above all others, I suppose it to have been this. The Millenium was more than a belief to him. It had the freshness of visible things. He was at home in it. His book on the subject has an air of reality, as if written from observation. He describes the habits and customs of the Millenium, as one familiar with them. He enjoyed this future glory of the church not a whit the less, because it was so much his own creation. The fundamental idea, the germ he found in the scriptures, but it expanded in and from his own mind. Whilst to the multitude he seemed a hard, dry theologian, feeding on the thorns of controversy, he was living in a region of imagination, feeding on visions of a holiness and a happiness, which are to make earth all but Heaven. It has been my privilege to meet with other examples of the same character, with men, who, amidst privation, under bodily infirmity, and with none of those materials of enjoyment which the multitude are striving for, live in a world of thought, and enjoy what affluence never dreamed of, men having nothing yet possessing all things; and the sight of such has done me more good, has spoken more to my head and heart, than many sermons and volumes. I have learned the sufficiency of the mind to itself, its independence on outward things.

I regret that I did not use my acquaintance with Dr. Hopkins to get the particulars of the habits and conversation of Edwards and Whitfield, whom he knew intimately. I value the hints which I get about distinguished men from their friends, much more than written accounts of them. Most biographies are of little worth. The true object of a biography, which is to give us an insight into men's characters, such as an intimate acquaintance with them would have furnished, is little comprehended. The sayings and actions of a man, which breathe most of what was individual in him, should be sought above all things by his historian; and yet most lives contain none or next to none of these. They are panegyrics, not lives. No department of literature is so false as biography. The object is, not to let down the hero; and consequently what is most human, most genuine, most characteristic in his history is excluded. Sometimes one anecdote will let us into the secret of a man's soul more than all the prominent events of his life. It is not impossible that some readers may object to some of my notices of the stern theologian, to whom this note refers, as too familiar. This seems to me their merit. They show that he was not a mere theologian, that he had the sympathies of a man.